

BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2026-28

FOREWORD

Environmental sustainability is one of the most important issues facing the world today, and the Borough of Broxbourne is no exception. The heatwave of July 2022 saw a small wildfire in Cheshunt Park whilst extreme storms have resulted in local events being cancelled for public safety. Residents regularly report how much they value the Borough's many green spaces and parks which are a factor to attract people to make their home within Broxbourne. However, statistics show that many properties in the Borough are energy inefficient, adversely impacting the residents financially and with their physical health.

At the beginning of this decade, the Council committed to take action to address these issues and protect the Borough's natural environment. My predecessors created an Environmental Sustainability Panel, allocated a ring-fenced £50,000 annual budget for the development of environmental projects, agreed the creation of a dedicated Sustainability Officer role and committed to working with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and other local authorities in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.

They also approved the first Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan, whose progress was monitored by both the Environmental Sustainability Panel and Cabinet. Some of the achievements in that first action plan that covered the period from 2021 to 2025 included:

- Planting over 15,000 trees
- Completing the New River cycling and walking path from the M25 to Wormley
- Setting a trajectory for reaching Carbon Net Zero by 2050 and undertaking carbonisation audits at the Borough's most energy intensive buildings resulting in capital funding being secured for solar panels and variable speed pumps
- Installing electric vehicle chargers in some of the Borough's car parks
- Working with HCC to secure £6million from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan
- Delivering cycle proficiency programmes in the Borough's primary schools
- Developing a sustainability checklist for planning permission applications
- Securing over £1million of *Warm Homes Local Grant* funding for energy efficiency improvements in low income households

The Council's new Corporate Plan 2025-29 has a corporate priority of creating an attractive, safe and sustainable environment, and commits the Borough to reducing carbon emissions and to protect the natural environment and enhance biodiversity in line with legislation in the Environment Act (2021).

This new Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan sets out what the Council will do to achieve a sustainable Broxbourne over the period from 2026 to 2028 when Local Government Reorganisation is planned to take place. It builds upon the achievements of the previous strategy and describes how the Council will work with residents, local businesses, other local authorities and other agencies so that the Broxbourne of 2028

is cleaner, greener, healthier and that residents are empowered and informed to make choices on living a sustainable lifestyle.

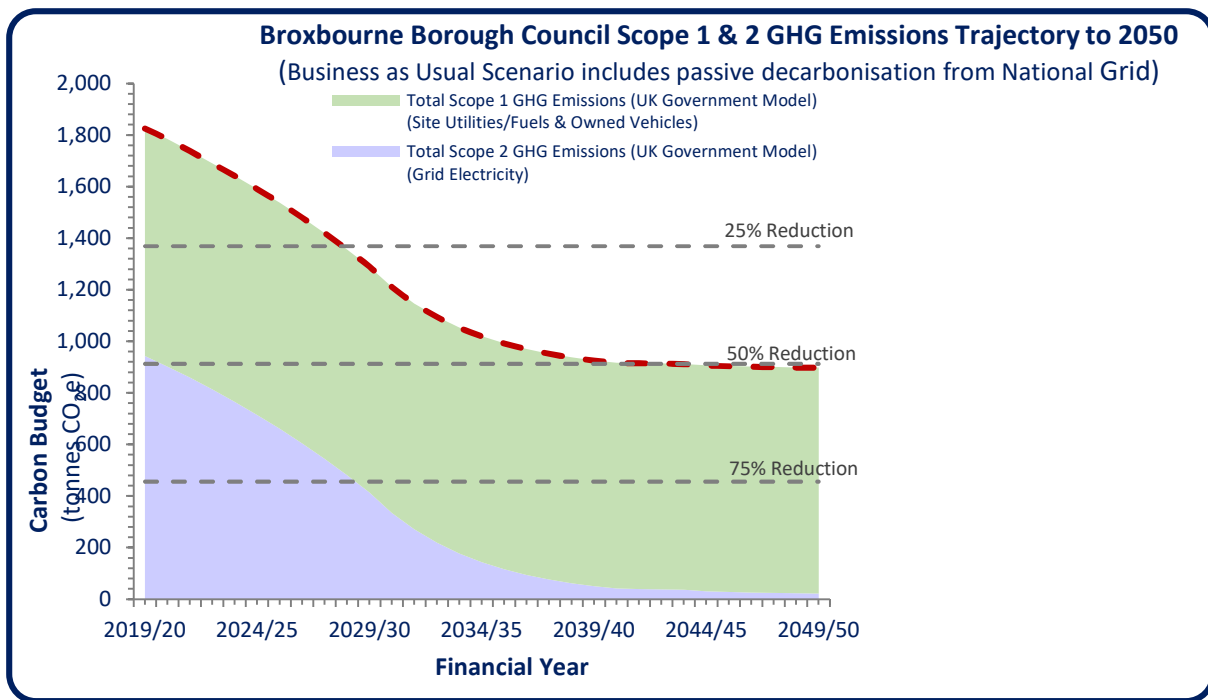
Cllr Corina Gander
Leader of Broxbourne Borough Council

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY

There is increasing evidence that humans are consuming natural resources faster than they can be replenished, harming ecosystems and reducing biodiversity across the world. Harmful emissions are making people sick, and have created man-made climate change which is now accelerating, raising temperatures in the climate, melting the polar ice caps and increasing the likelihood of flooding. Since the first strategy was approved in 2021, the United Kingdom has experienced both heat waves, including the hottest day on record which resulted in some small fires in Cheshunt Park, and extreme storms.

Everyone must take action now to live a more sustainable lifestyle, both for their own well-being and for the sake of their children and descendants who will inhabit this planet in the future. The Council has showed leadership by creating the post of Sustainability Officer and establishing the Environmental Sustainability Panel with a budget and commitment to make the Council and the Borough more sustainable, and to help local organisations, businesses and residents to take action too.

A trajectory to reach net zero carbon emissions was set in March 2023 with a target year of 2050 in line with Government targets. Emissions would need to be reduced by 6.4% per annum. Progress against reaching net zero carbon emissions is monitored and reported annually. At the end of 2024/25 the Council had exceeded its target by 26% although had reduced its emissions from 1,726 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2019/20 to 1,556 tonnes in 2024/25. Decarbonisation will be a priority for the period of this strategy with the aim of bringing the Council's emissions back into alignment with the trajectory agreed in March 2023. To achieve this, the Council will continue to invest in renewable energy sources for its facilities and improving their energy efficiency.



LOCAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Borough of Broxbourne is in the southeast corner of Hertfordshire, with London to the south and Essex to the east. It has an area of approximately 5,200 Ha with 291 Ha of open space and parks owned by the Council. Broxbourne's Green Belt is 2,832 Ha.

The area includes the internationally designated Broxbourne-Hoddesdon Woods complex, a Special Area for Conservation, and the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) which is on the eastern boundary of the Borough. The Lee Valley SPA has been designated for internationally important numbers of over-wintering wildfowl, especially gadwall, shoveller and bittern. The Lee Valley SPA is also designated as a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance. In addition, there are 35 Local Wildlife Sites considered to be of significance for wildlife in at least a district context. There are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Rye Meads, Turnford and Cheshunt Pits and Wormley Hoddesdon Park (North and South). The leafy natural environment of the Borough is a significant asset and one of the most important reasons why residents like living here.

The population of the Borough is around 100,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2023). This is projected to increase to 110,000 by 2033. The Local Plan aims to accommodate this growth by creating 7,700 new houses and helping to generate between 5,000 and 6,000 new jobs in Broxbourne between 2017 and 2033.

The most significant challenge for the Borough in accommodating such growth sustainably is the growth in vehicular traffic and air pollution from their emissions. Residents rely heavily on cars to get around as, although north-south public transport links are reasonably good, travelling east-west is difficult without a car. With the M25 motorway forming the southern boundary of the Borough, and the A10 running up the

middle, there is a significant volume of through traffic as well as local traffic, with congestion resulting in vehicle idling. Five Air Quality Management Areas have been revoked by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) since 2019 following sustained compliance with the air quality levels for nitrogen dioxide. There are currently two Air Quality Management Areas in the Borough which are covered by an Air Quality Action Plan.

The Council will continue to work closely with Hertfordshire County Council and other local authorities and community organisations in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, which was established in May 2020. The Partnership offers opportunities to work together on issues such as retrofit which improves the energy efficiency of homes in Hertfordshire reducing both energy bills and carbon emissions. Working together also offers significant scope to improve the reach of public awareness and information campaigns on sustainable living and working, as well as sharing expertise and reducing costs around training for staff.

BROXBOURNE SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES AND ACTION PLAN

There are three priorities in the Strategy and Action Plan:

- A sustainable Council
- A greener Broxbourne
- Supporting action by businesses and residents

For each priority there is a set of objectives with tasks and responsible officers who will be responsible for implementing these, subject in some cases to funding being secured. There is a total of 79 actions in the plan. The Environmental Sustainability Panel will monitor progress in implementing the tasks in the action plan with an annual report presented to Cabinet.

The Strategic Action Plan covers the following objectives:

A sustainable Council

1. Reduce the Carbon Footprint of the Council's buildings
2. Reduce the use of petrol and diesel by the Council and minimise emissions
3. Consider sustainability in use of materials and procurement decisions

A greener Broxbourne

4. Take action to improve air quality
5. Protect and enhance biodiversity
6. Carry out a greenery planting programme
7. Climate Change Adaptation

Supporting action by businesses and residents

8. Increase the proportion of local journeys made by sustainable or low-carbon modes of travel
9. Reduce waste and increase recycling

10. Engage residents further in improving their local environment and adopting a sustainable lifestyle.
11. Encourage businesses to become more sustainable and to develop their resilience to climate risks
12. Work with partners to protect water sustainability

By implementing these actions, the Council will be on track to meet its target of reaching Carbon Net Zero emissions by 2050 and its legal obligations under the Environment Action. Residents will be supported in reducing their energy bills and given more options to travel using active or green transport. Businesses will be supported including in opportunities for contracts to engage with countywide initiatives to retrofit homes.